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Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas
on behalf of the European Commission
(20.2.2026)

The Commission has taken note of recent statements by the Russian authorities concerning the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Russia has an established record of systematic violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief and has instrumentalised the Russian Orthodox Church to advance its geopolitical objectives.

States must refrain from interfering in the internal organisation of religious institutions: a principle firmly protected under international human rights law.

Churches are meant to promote peace, non-violence, mutual understanding and reconciliation. In this regard, the EU values the constructive role played by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, including its efforts to separate religion from nationalism, encourage interfaith dialogue and protect the environment.

The EU remains firmly committed to upholding the right to freedom of religion or belief for all and it will continue to promote this right and denounce violations of it in the multilateral human rights fora and in its bilateral relations with third countries.